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What is meant by a State of Nature? or rather what have those who have written on the subject intended by that which they denominated a State of Nature. The truth is that few even intelligent persons of understanding themselves but for the purposes of the present essay

it is unnecessary to puzzle ourselves with subtlety, and perplex ourselves with defining that. Term Incognita so much talked of by philosophers and so little accessible to revelation or reason.

Leaving the consideration of the matter, we shall for the present take the distinction laid down by an author who has talked very arrogantly on the subject. The work we allude to is entitled "Fragments on Government." The author falls on Blackstone and very stupidly on Sir William Blackstone, and thinks he has settled the wrangling of ages nations to admiration. While oblivion has taken him under her peculiar protection, we shall for a moment take up his ashes and assume his definition of a state of nature, as opposed to political society.

He makes the habit of obedience the boundary line between their

two states: being absent in the former, and present in the latter. We acknowledge that the two conditions run into each other like light & shade, so that it is even theoretically impossible to determine their limits.

But we hold, that assuming this definition as just, there is no such thing in nature (that is human) as what is called "a state of nature"; and we make the habit of obedience the boundary line, not between man in his natural and civilized state, but between man and the brutes, who alone could ever have been, or can be, in "this pleasant predicament," where the wits of so many have been long woolgathering; and where, inspired by the evil communications of the place, they forswore all further obedience to common sense.

A brief enquiry into the difference between the affections of the human

race and of the brutes, will furnish us with sufficient data to prove that the habit of obedience is essential to the existence of such a being as man. When the brutes have reared their young, till they are able to take care of themselves, their cares cease, and there is no longer any distinction of parent and child. There is no such thing as incest among brutes. Now, were there such a thing as a state of nature, man, as it relates to his associations with man, would be precisely in the situations of the brutes, allowing the distinction which we have adopted. For if the habit of obedience naturally continues, and does not depend on adventitious causes, after a human being has acquired strength and discretion sufficient to take care of himself, the conclusion is drawn at once, that there is no such thing as "a state of nature".

The point then on which the in-

query turns, is obvious and simple. It is, whether Incest is known to human nature in its untaught state, or not; Whether the horror with which a contemplation of the crime inspires us, is one of the principles of our nature, and coexistent with desire itself, or is the result of education and constant associating.

The question need only be asked, in this regular form, to shew how it influences the argument. It is unnecessary to attempt proving that in the first degree of relationship, namely, between parent and child, the intercourse of sex is abhorrent to human nature. That we are inclined to go further. It is maintained that there is nothing in our nature, which places brother and sister on a different footing, from any other male and female, as to the intercourse of sex. They reject to constant association from infancy upwards, as

the cause which immediately produces the difference with which brothers and sisters regard each other, from others of the same sex. But if this were the reason, the same cause would produce the same effect, if two children were brought up together, between whom there was no manner of relation: which it does not. They say, that convenience made the custom of such marriages rare, and that religion established the incestuous nature of the connexion. But this is only assigning additional causes for that, which we contend is already sufficiently well accounted for, in the original principles of our nature. For lastly, to illustrate this doctrine, we are told that Cain & the other sons of Adam, must some of them have married their sisters. This may be supposed at first, and therefore so ordained. Again, the Persian and

Egyptian princes are in the habit of marrying their sisters. Their pride was such, that none other were fit to ascend the royal couch; they wished to imitate the Gods, whose majesty they were supposed to represent — and as Juno was both the sister and the wife of Jove, they aspired to rival the Thunderer in his imaginary singularity. The very horror of the connexion made it a distinction between majesty & subordination.

The general voice of the human species on this subject, whether man is found under the control of a hierarchy, or wandering in deserts where the name of infallibility never was pronounced, rebuts all other presumptions, that which we maintain.

But to put this highly interesting and otherwise easily enquiry, it is sufficient if in one instance a line, man differs from the brutes in

those affections, which are alike common to the polished & the uncivilized, the savage and the sage.

Brutes do not know their parents. No relationship is a restraint on the indiscriminate commerce of the same species among them. But between a human being and his offspring, God has established a sacred and a holy reciprocation of feeling; too pure for passion, and too strong to be dissolved. Respect and reverence are natural to children; and obedience follows respect.

Now, what is meant by "the habit of obedience?" Brutes sooner attain their powers of self preservation. The care of the parents is required but for a very short time. If they have memory, which is by no means certain, that care is very soon forgotten by both the mother and her offspring. But man requires a long

and careful attention in his infancy, and a fifth part of an extended life must elapse, before he is capable, generally, of self preservation. This is certainly a length of time sufficient to form and confirm any habit; more especially that habit which is perpetually present.

We are told that a state of nature and of political society run into each other like light and shade. Now we can speak of political society, without supposing that the habit of obedience is perfectly present: but we cannot speak of a State of Nature, which is abstract, and only conceived by a negation, without at the same time conveying the idea, that the habit of obedience is perfectly absent. We may then, if we please, suppose that the habit of obedience to arbitrary power, decreases as we go back to times

or four thousand years; if we attain the period when there was no other subordination than that incident to the patriarchal form of government, we still find the habit of obedience there.

The conclusion to be drawn is, not that men are ever in a state of nature for a punctum temporis, from which they immediately lapsed into obedience; but that a state where obedience is perfectly absent, is inconceivable and impossible; an absurdity in the idea, and a perversion of language, when denominated "a state of nature!" It is the most unnatural thing imaginable, when applied to the human race.

As from the superior powers given to man, from the advantages derived from his upright form and the arrangement of his limbs, from the gift of intellect and the faculty

of communicating with his fellow by the utterance of articulate sounds, he stands at the head of all animals generally, but more particularly of the gregarious tribes, obedience, the material incident in the nature of those species, is also supereminently incident to his constitution. XX I Bol.

If a newly born infant were left in a wilderness and suckled by a wolf, if his energies could expand, and his strength increase, until he was able to defend himself; this would be the strongest case imaginable of an independent being. Yet even here, whatever ends an individual should happen to retain of his human nature, would contain in it and keep alive the principle of obedience; the immediate object of which, we may suppose, would be the beast that suckled him.

Again, if, as the Egyptians suppose was the case, when men were ori-

: ginally produced, the faith of Cadmus could be realized, and full grown men could spring out of the earth, by one impulse of creative energy, then for a point of time, they would be in a "state of nature" according to our definition; from which the principle of obedience would soon relieve them.

But, man being what he is, there is no such thing as a State of Nature. For, to constitute it, there must be two individuals on earth at least, neither of which obeys, nor is obeyed. Adam alone owed no obedience to a human being; and it was therefore necessary, that he should be immediately under the direction of his Maker. Man is born in and destined to obedience. He leaps at first into the Patriarchal form of Government.

S.